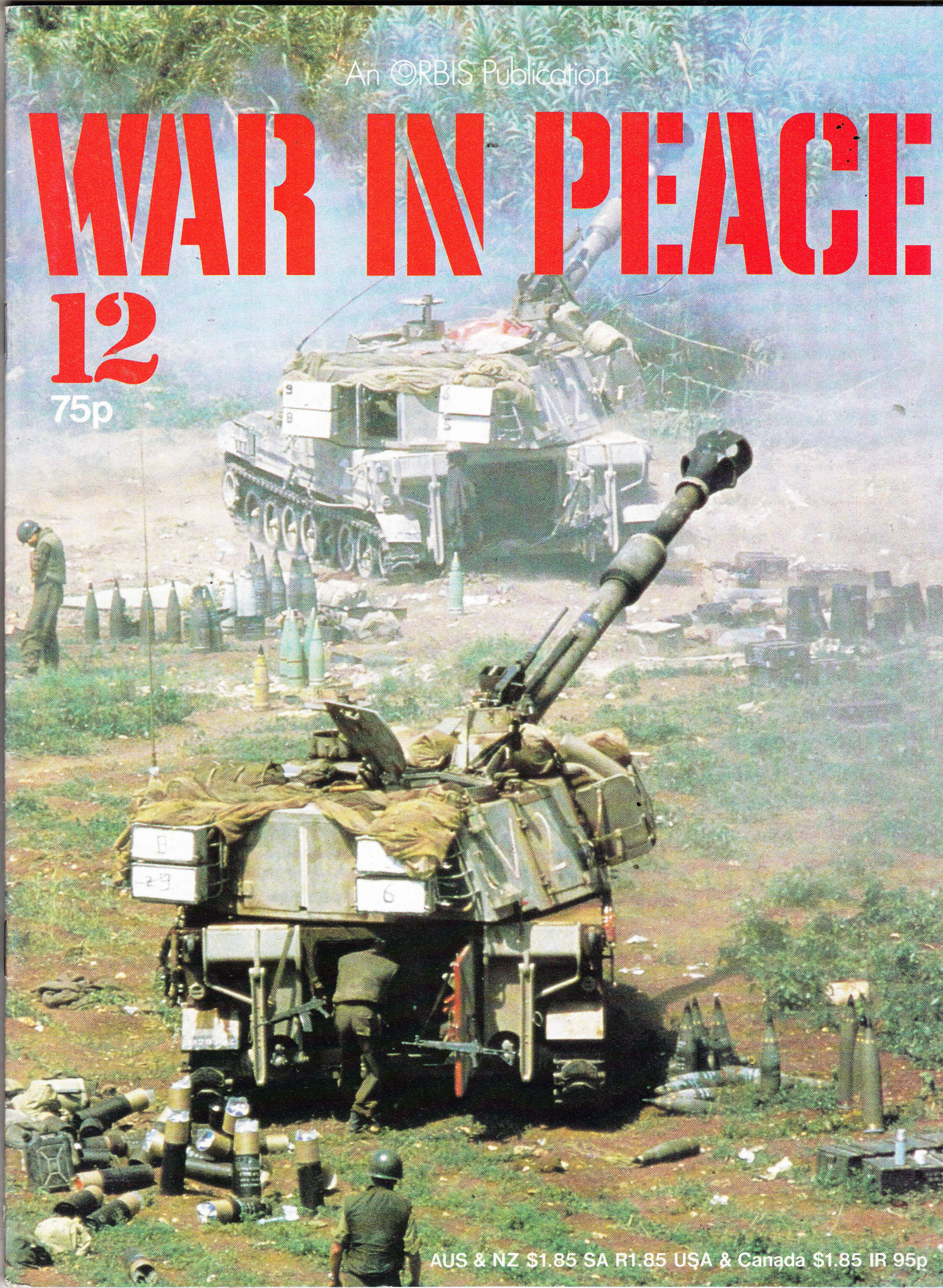


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WAR IN PEACE

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This week in War in Peace

Until 1950, Korea was little known to the rest of the world, except as a rugged peninsula in East Asia. But in 1950, one of the biggest wars in history broke out there; the peninsula was brought to the forefront of everyone's attention. The Korean War was an enormous conflict. There were probably over one million deaths in the fighting (calculations are difficult because of the lack of accurate figures from the communist side) and some of the engagements that took place—the landings at Inchon, the retreat of the US 1st Marines from the Chosin reservoir, the heroic stand of the Glosters at the Imjin River—stand among the great feats of arms of the 20th century. This week we look at the beginnings of this conflict, from the sudden invasion of the North Korean communists to the enormous risk taken by General MacArthur when he ordered amphibious landings in the dangerous waters of Inchon harbour.

Our weapons feature concentrates on the self-propelled artillery of the Israeli Army, the weapons that blasted a way through the Lebanon in 1982 and are at the heart of the Israeli concept of mobile warfare.

Next week's issue

Next week we look at the horrific struggle for the Red River Delta, when massed attacks by the Viet Minh on French positions were met with napalm. The weapons feature is the aircraft that many observers believe is the best fighter ever built: the F-15 Eagle.

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Korea: the beginning

The communists invade the South

The Korean peninsula, which became a battle ground between the United Nations forces and the communist Chinese and North Koreans between 1950 and 1953, has a geographical unity that makes it a tragedy that it was divided at the end of World War II. To the north, adjoining the Yalu River and Manchuria, are the mineral resources such as coal, iron, tungsten, copper, graphite and gold, with hydro-electric power for extraction and smelting. In the south are agricultural resources—rice and barley. In 1950, South Korea was able to export 100,000 tonnes of rice to Japan, and before partition, these agricultural products complemented perfectly the coal, timber and electric power from the north.

The peninsula varies between 145km and 322km (90-200 miles) in width and from 845km to 966km (525-600 miles) in length. Running the length of the country is the Taebaek mountain chain which rises to 2591m (8500 feet). This high ground means that only 20 per cent of the land is arable and 70 per cent of the people practise intensive cultivation with elaborate terracing of the mountains. Their origins and religions are mixed; Confucians, Buddhists, Animists and Christians make up the population.

The war of 1950-53 dates back to promises of independence made by the Allied leaders at Cairo and Potsdam during World War II. Korea had been occupied by the Japanese since their victory in the Russo-

Below: The crew of a halftrack-mounted 40mm anti-aircraft gun search the sky for enemy aircraft at the Taegu Air Base in Korea.



KOREA 1950

Japanese War of 1904. It had been ruled as a colony, but in 1942 it was made an integral part of Japan and its population was conscripted for second-line military service.

The Allied promises of independence were confused by a combination of the rapid attack by the Soviet Union through Manchuria in 1945, and by the equally fast surrender of the Japanese following the two atomic bomb attacks on their mainland. After Soviet troops entered northern Korea a hurried Allied agreement on 15 August 1945 established the 38th degree of latitude as the limit of their advance, and the area that would be secured while taking the Japanese surrender.

US troops moved into the area south of the 38th parallel and both nations took the Japanese surrenders. However, following these ceremonies, the USSR took the 38th parallel to be a political boundary and it was here that the Iron Curtain fell with the onset of the Cold War.

Two years passed, with the US attempting to get the problem referred to the newly formed United Nations Organisation. The UN undertook to establish an independent Korean government after free nationwide elections but the Soviet Union refused to cooperate with the arrangements.

On 15 August 1947 the Republic of (South) Korea was established with Seoul as its capital. The USSR declared this illegal and then sponsored the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea with Pyongyang as its capital.

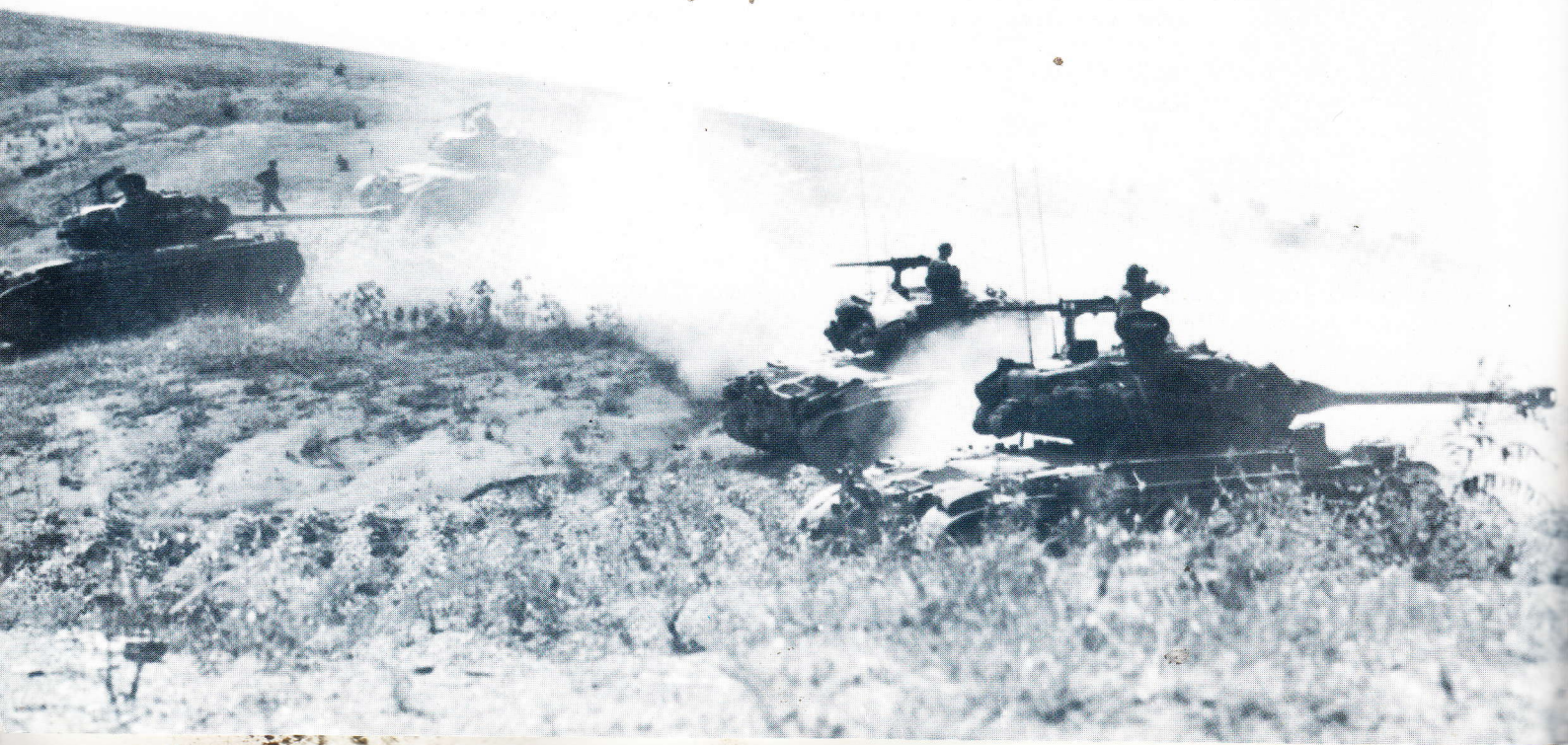
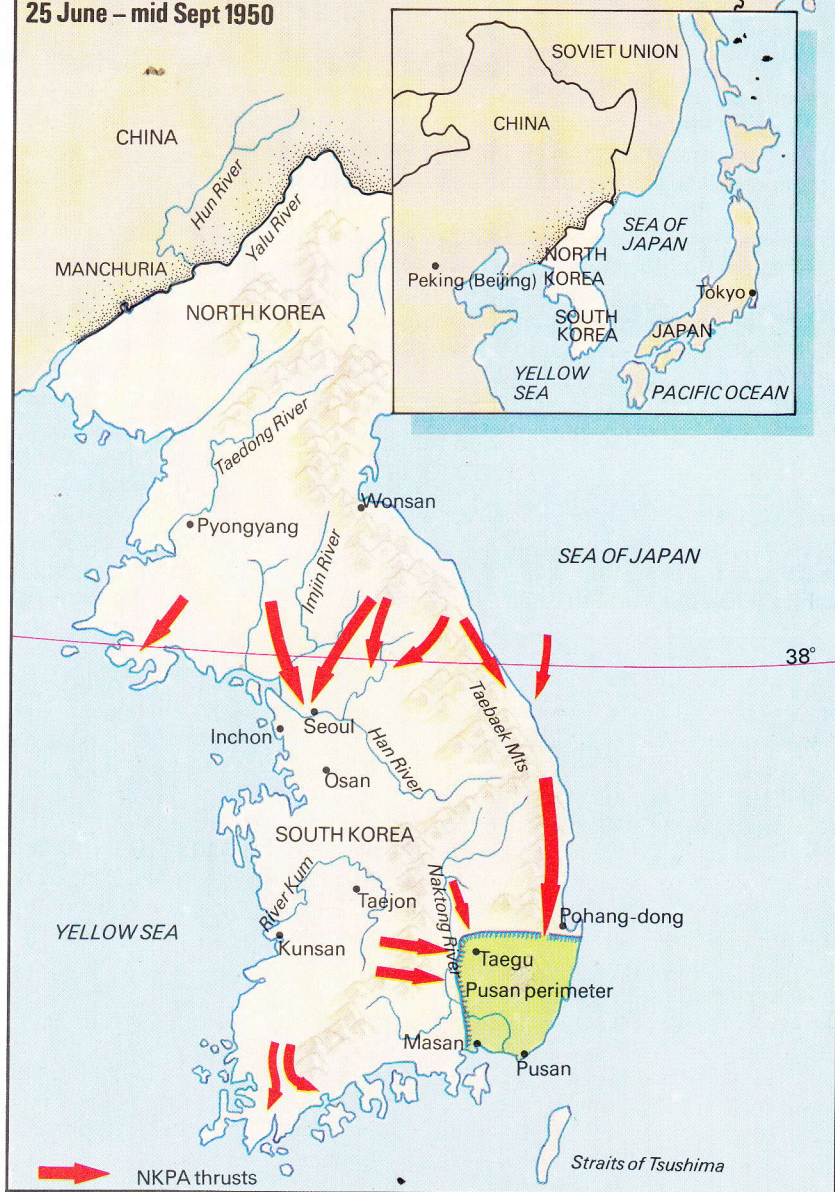
The elections that were held in South Korea, under the auspices of the UN, had produced a right-wing coalition headed by Syngman Rhee. Though 210 representatives were elected, some 100 seats were kept vacant for members from the North. After the establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK), the US forces withdrew.

To the north, the USSR had streamlined politics into a classic one-party communist state and in elections to a Supreme People's Assembly, Kim Il Sung took office as Premier. Kim had been groomed by the Soviet Union over many years and it was said he had fought for the USSR at Stalingrad in World War II.

The North Korean People's Army (NKPA) had

The invasion of South Korea

25 June – mid Sept 1950



received good training from its Soviet advisers and by 1950 was estimated to have some 135,000 troops. It had eight infantry divisions at full strength and a further two at half strength with a motorcycle reconnaissance regiment and an armoured brigade. The NKPA possessed some 150 Soviet-made T34 tanks and each division had a towed artillery regiment (122mm howitzers) and a self-propelled gun battalion (76mm guns). The air force had 180 Russian fighter-bombers of World War II vintage. In addition to the regular units, which were given added strength from a hard core of some 25,000 veterans of the Chinese communist campaign in Manchuria, the NKPA could call on 100,000 trained reservists.

By contrast, the ROK Army was poorly equipped. Its eight divisions held 100,000 men, but they had neither medium nor heavy tanks, combat aircraft or reserves and only a small amount of artillery.

Withdrawal and invasion

In December 1948 Soviet forces left North Korea, but this served only to signal a campaign to undermine the South Korean government; cross-border raids, sabotage and virulent propaganda were all employed. Then, on 25 June 1950, the NKPA invaded South Korea. The precise reasoning behind the invasion is unclear, although almost certainly one factor in communist calculations was the lack of interest that the USA had shown in smaller-scale aggression across the border.

Seven infantry divisions of the NKPA, with the tank brigade and supporting troops, crossed the border. Commanded by Marshal Choe Yong Gun, they advanced in two columns towards Seoul. An additional column moved along the eastern coast while one small unit thrust into an enclave on the western coast that was south of the 38th parallel. The NKPA attack came as a complete surprise to the South; there had been no forewarning and many soldiers were on weekend leave.

The four South Korean divisions in the path of the main NKPA attack were scattered and the NKPA quickly advanced across the Han River and pressed southwards. The North Korean and Soviet scheme was to complete the invasion quickly and then present the world with a fait accompli – their excuse for the invasion of 25 June was that the ROK forces had attacked first.

On the day of the invasion, the Security Council of the UN went into emergency session and ordered the NKPA to cease its operations. Two days later the US President, Harry Truman, ordered General Douglas MacArthur to report on the ROK's capability to resist the invasion and to lend support to the ROK Army with air and sea forces. MacArthur had at his disposal the US Seventh Fleet and the Far East Air Force as well as ground forces in Japan composed of four understrength divisions with no support arms. Equipment was at two thirds its normal strength.

However, within five days of the invasion, American units began to move to Korea by sea and air. On 4 July an understrength battalion, with an artillery battery in support, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles B. Smith, took over positions near Osan. The day after their arrival they were attacked by an NKPA division with 30 tanks. Surrounded, and deserted by adjoining ROK forces, they fought for seven hours before breaking out, abandoning their vehicles and war material.



General William F. Dean, commanding the US 24th Division, committed his forces as soon as they became available. Between 16 and 20 July he held off the NKPA advance at Taejon and then, as the North Koreans assaulted the positions along three axes, he took command of the rearguard as the survivors withdrew. Dean was captured, but his delaying action had allowed the US 1st Cavalry Division to arrive from Japan, and as the 24th was withdrawn, the 1st Cavalry and 25th Divisions bolstered the ROK defences and slowed down the NKPA advance.

On 7 July 1950 MacArthur was designated the commander-in-chief of the UN Command. The appointment, made by President Truman, was in response to a UN request for an overall commander for the forces in Korea. But by the end of July 1950, the ROK and US forces had been pushed back to the small perimeter of Pusan in the southeast corner of Korea. The US forces, now the Eighth Army commanded by Major-General Walton Walker, held a line along the Naktong River, about 145km (90 miles) north from the sea (the Straits of Tsushima), and thence about 97km (60 miles) towards the Sea of Japan. Within this perimeter was Pusan, the only deep-water harbour available.

The ROK now fielded five re-equipped divisions and covered the north, while the US defended the west where the main weight of the NKPA attacks were directed. The US Seventh Fleet not only covered the sea flanks, but harassed NKPA movements with naval gunfire and carrier-borne air attacks while the Far East Air Force, with an Australian group, attacked NKPA lines of communication and logistic centres.

Despite the increasing strength of the United Nations Command forces as they continued their military build-up in Korea, it seemed unlikely that the units that had already suffered defeats in the north, at the hands of the NKPA, could continue to withstand the relentless assaults of the communist forces. But the concentration of NKPA units around the Pusan perimeter had opened the way for MacArthur to launch an offensive in the communist rear. Pusan had to hold out in order that the daring landings at Inchon could take place.

William Fowler

Bottom left: A unit of M26 Pershing heavy tanks, armed with 90mm guns, prepare to engage enemy targets from a hilltop position. Above: Members of a South Korean Community Protective Corps; armed only with sharpened bamboo canes they pose for a photograph prior to going on guard duty. Formed in 1948 the Corps was raised to protect the local population from communist harassment.

The US Army

Postwar planning and new responsibilities

By the end of World War II the United States had proven itself to be the most powerful state in the world, to be in fact the first superpower. No other nation could approach it in wealth; and the Americans, besides possessing the only atomic weapons in the world, had the largest air force and navy. The United States Army was not as large in terms of numbers as the Red Army or the Chinese Army, but with over 8 million men and 89 divisions it was still a formidable force. Furthermore there was no doubt that it was the best equipped in the world; no other force could match it in mobility and firepower.

This was the more remarkable because in September 1939 the US Army mustered only 210,000 men. Even in December 1941, when America actually joined the war, it still possessed just 34 divisions which, short of every sort of equipment and lacking trained manpower, really existed in name only. The speed with which the United States had mobilised and trained its army was impressive, but this was exceeded by the haste with which the whole process was reversed.

Although the United States government had no intention of returning to its pre-war policy of isolationism, the American public expected their fighting

men to be returned to their families without delay. By the end of 1945, less than four months after the end of the war, the army's manpower had been halved. The army tried to establish a points system to determine soldiers' release dates, based on length and type of service. However, when it tried to slow down the return of men to civilian life, there was a public outcry in the United States and 'demonstrations' among troops stationed in China, the Philippines, Hawaii, Britain, France, Germany and even California. The army was obliged to release immediately everyone who had served for more than two years. By July 1946 army strength had fallen to 1,891,011, which included air force personnel. When manpower finally stabilised a year later the army numbered only 684,000 ground troops and 306,000 in the Army Air Force.

About half these troops were serving abroad and occupation duties were the army's first priority. American garrisons were maintained in Germany, Austria, Trieste, Japan and Korea. Germany was divided into four zones of occupation between the Americans, British, French and Russians. The complete destruction of the Nazi government left the Allied armies responsible for the disarmament, de-

Dismantling the American war machine: rows and rows of engineless P-40s, part of a salvage pile of more than 40,000 planes.



militarisation and denazification of Germany.

It soon became clear that the former Allies differed widely in their policy towards Germany. As the four powers were unable to agree how to rebuild Germany, and in particular what sort of government should be established, the country drifted into a partition which was recognised by the establishment of two German states in 1949. The American garrison in Germany was a rather mixed force. Its only field formation was the 1st Infantry Division, and it included the US Constabulary, a mobile force with an internal security role.

In Austria the problems were rather similar to Germany and were not solved until the Austrian State Treaty (May 1955) led to the withdrawal of all occupation forces. In Trieste the Allied garrison was concerned to protect Italy's claim to the city against Yugoslavia. In the Far East occupation duties were made rather easier by the fact that the garrisons were almost entirely American. In Japan there were four divisions under General Douglas MacArthur, with a small British Commonwealth force, but the Russians were not permitted to contribute. Korea was divided into Russian and American spheres and, as in Germany, this eventually led to the establishment of two states. Soviet and American forces then withdrew in 1949.

Clearly it was impossible that an army should suffer such drastic reductions in manpower and that so much of what remained should be employed on occupation duties without military efficiency declining. By the end of 1947 the US Army was only a shadow of its former strength; and a shortage of properly-trained maintenance troops led to a rapid deterioration in the army's equipment.



The authorities were naturally aware of these problems but their efforts to remedy them were hampered by lack of public support and by in-fighting between the services. The army had a long-standing ambition to establish a system of universal military training, with a comparatively small regular army and a large pool of trained manpower to be mobilised in wartime, but such ideas found little support in Congress or among the public. The army was the least popular of the armed services and public opinion seemed to consider ground troops obsolete in the atomic age. Congress would not even extend the wartime Selective Service Act beyond March 1947, and although a new Selective Service Act was passed in June 1948 it only increased the army's strength by 100,000.

Above: 'D' company of the 5th Regiment of US Marines mount an M26 tank to spearhead a patrol in search of guerrillas operating in the east of Korea.



THE US ARMY

In fact the army's scheme did not actually correspond to the realities of the late 1940s anyway. As the Cold War developed it became obvious that the army would need large forces in peacetime in order to meet its commitments. A trained reserve which could be mobilised for a total war would have been useful for the Americans in World Wars I or II, but such a structure was less useful when it was becoming obvious that the Americans' first priority was to prevent a world war from happening. The era of deterrence and containment demanded large, well-trained and well-equipped forces available in peacetime. Early in 1948 General George Marshall, the wartime chief of staff whom Truman had made Secretary of State, warned the National Security Council that 'we are playing with fire while we have nothing to put it out'.

This was partly because the armed forces were arguing so much among themselves. The National Security Act of 1947 was passed to establish a national organisation for defence planning, but in many ways it only made the situation worse. The air force at last achieved full independence from the army, so there were now three services fighting for their share of the defence budget. The air force was arguing for a 70-group striking force, while the navy was seeking funds to build a class of 80,000-ton aircraft carriers. The army's requirements were easily lost to sight during the very public argument between the other two services. It was not until 1949 that an amendment to the National Security Act gave the Secretary of State real power to coordinate defence planning and brought the services together in one Department of Defense (which soon became known as the Pentagon, after the building it occupied).

In 1950 the National Security Council claimed that the Soviet Union's nuclear programme would match America's by 1954. Once a nuclear stalemate was reached the Soviet Union's superiority in ground forces would become increasingly significant. The Council argued that the United States should build up its conventional forces in order to counter the Soviet strength. Such a policy could have been the foundation for a far-reaching reorganisation of the army to prepare it for the challenges of the 1950s. However, although the president supported the programme it was not implemented because of the costs involved.

A survey of the US Army in June 1950 would have shown it to be a force reduced by financial pressures to a strength of 591,000 that was organised into three combat arms – infantry, armour and artillery – and 14 services. These services were the Adjutant General's Corps, Army Medical Service, Chaplain's Corps, Chemical Corps, Corps of Engineers, Finance Corps, Inspector General's Corps, Judge Advocate General's Corps, Military Police Corps, Ordnance Corps, Quartermaster's Corps, Signal Corps, Transportation Corps and Women's Army Corps.

The field army consisted of 10 divisions, 9 regi-



Above: US Marines in Tientsin, China, on board a street-car, clearing the way for the movement of Japanese civilians, who, without the protection of the troops, ran the risk of lynchings by the Chinese. Below: A Sherman tank of the 15th Tank Company. Shermans were easy to produce in large numbers, but were decidedly inferior to Soviet machines like the T34.

mental combat teams (brigade-sized units) and the European Constabulary. Five divisions served overseas, four in Japan and one in Germany. The remaining five were in the General Reserve in the United States and consisted of one armoured, two infantry and two airborne infantry divisions.

This was not an impressive order of battle and only one division, the 1st Infantry in Germany, was at anything like full strength. The rest had been 'skeletonised' as part of the economy measures. Thus each division's three infantry regiments had only two battalions rather than three, and each battalion was short of a rifle company. The divisional artillery was at two-thirds of its required strength and most infantry divisions lacked their organic armoured battalion.

The US Army's tactical doctrine was basically unchanged since 1945. It looked back to the experience of the last war rather than tried to foretell the requirements of a future conflict. It is therefore not surprising that the army was still equipped with the weapons of World War II. The M1 rifle and the Browning Automatic Rifle were the standard weapons of the infantry squad. Most of the United States tank park still consisted of Sherman tanks.

Three new tanks, light, medium and heavy, were under design but as a stop-gap it had been decided to modify some 2000 M26 Pershing heavy tanks. The



new tank, known as the M46 Patton, appeared in 1948. The pressures of the Korean War ensured that, in order to save time, the Americans continued to modify the M46 – producing the M47, M48 and eventually the M60 – rather than design a completely new vehicle.

When the North Korean Army crossed the 38th parallel on 25 June 1950, therefore, the American formations sent to help the South Koreans were World War II units in organisation, tactics and equipment. However they lacked the combat experience of the divisions of 1945 and soon experienced difficulties. The basic Sherman tank was no match for the Russian-built T34 used by the North Koreans. At first the American infantry were still equipped with the 75mm rocket launcher which could not penetrate the T34, even if the over-age rockets worked. With few or no anti-tank mines and little anti-tank ammunition for the 105mm gun, the Americans were ridiculously ill-equipped for the army of the world's richest economy. Furthermore the skeletonised formations proved to be tactically inept. A regimental commander with just two battalions under command could create a reserve only by compromising the effectiveness of his forward troops. Units outside Korea had to be cannibalised to bring the Korean divisions up to strength.

But the Korean War did awaken Congress to the deficiencies of the defence budget, which was increased overnight from \$15 billion to \$60 billion. A programme of universal military training was established and the army rose to a strength of 2,834,000 men with 20 divisions in its order of battle. Eight National Guard divisions were embodied for service. In all, eight army divisions were used in Korea and the US Army's strength in Germany rose to five divisions. In Korea the policy was to post men to the country on a nine-month tour. There were arguments in favour of this policy of troop rotation, but it did not make for stability and continuity in combat units. The huge expansion of the army placed a great strain on its



junior leadership. The West Point class of 1950 graduated directly to combat duty in Korea and a high proportion became casualties.

After President Dwight D. Eisenhower came to power, defence expenditure was once again cut, to achieve the 'maximum deterrent at a bearable cost'. In practice this meant greater reliance on nuclear weapons, not only strategically but on the battlefield as well. As tactical nuclear weapons became technically feasible they were welcomed as a way of saving expensive manpower. It was thought that smaller, more mobile armoured formations would be required on the nuclear battlefield, which gave rise to the 'pentomic' division built around five self-contained battlegroups. Such a formation was only really suited to a European battlefield, but the United States was determined to avoid minor wars elsewhere. It was not until the late 1950s that officers like Generals Matthew Ridgway and Maxwell Taylor forced the government to accept that a world role required forces for every eventuality, whatever the cost, and it was only after 1960 that the US Army began to prepare realistically for limited war roles.

Michael Orr

Above: UN infantry trudge through North Korean hill country. The biting winters and often difficult terrain posed many problems for foreign soldiers. Below: American Military Police move in fast to disperse a crowd of protesters in Trieste, Italy.



Over the top

MacArthur's audacious landings at Inchon

When a powerful army overwhelms a weaker enemy there is always a temptation for the victorious commander to press his advantage to the limit by advancing as fast as he can go. Yet every kilometre of ground covered in such an advance increases the length of the lines of communication and thus makes it ever more difficult to replenish the army as it advances. The North Korean advance southwards towards Pusan produced just such a situation as the logistic units struggled to keep the front line troops provided with arms, ammunition and supplies.

The problem for the North Koreans was the scarcity of roads and railways in the Korean peninsula. What communication routes there were ran north to south down the peninsula and, because of the rugged mountains inland, they all passed through or close to the city of Seoul, the capital.

Already, during his first visit to Korea after the invasion from the north, General Douglas MacArthur had realised the significance of the problem for the North Koreans. If the enemy lines of communication could be cut, their fighting capability would quickly diminish and the impetus of their advance would falter. This would take the pressure off the UN and South Korean forces to the south who were fighting desperately to bring the Northern forces to a halt.

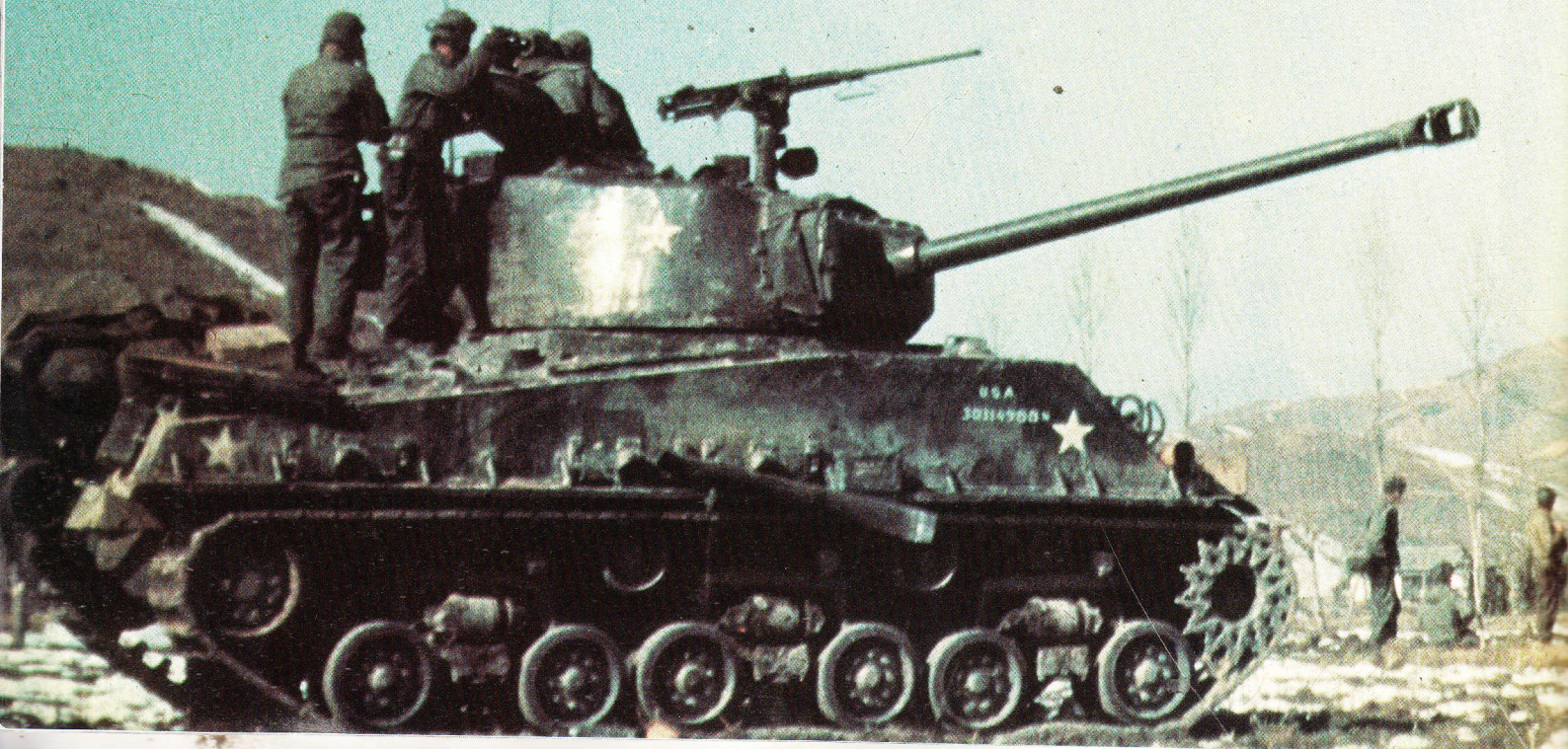
Where MacArthur's greatness came to the fore was not in his recognition of the gains to be had if the North's communications could be cut, but rather in his determination, against all odds, to mount an operation to *do* the cutting.

He made up his mind to launch an amphibious

landing as early as 29 June 1950, only four days after the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) had crossed the 38th parallel and started the Korean War. On returning to Tokyo from Korea he began planning, on 4 July, for an amphibious landing of a division at Inchon. The code name was to be Operation Bluehearts. His intention was that the 1st US Cavalry Division, part of the garrison in Japan and hastily brought to war strength, should carry out the landing.

The enthusiasm and dash thus displayed by MacArthur was not, at this stage, to pay dividends and his first attempt to seize the initiative was thwarted on two grounds. In the first place, and most importantly, the NKPA advanced so fast towards the southern tip of the peninsula that the few American formations available in Japan (and this included 1st Cavalry) simply had to be used to make a stand in the south around the harbour of Pusan. Secondly, MacArthur set 22 July as the day for the landing (he had little choice, as low tides precluded any other day in July) and this set his staff an impossible task. To plan a landing and assemble the necessary men, weapons, aircraft and ships in 18 days was just not feasible.

Operation Bluehearts was cancelled on 10 July but from then on MacArthur made repeated demands for the men and war material he needed in order to mount the operation at a later date. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in the United States conceded the need to begin a major mobilisation of resources and promised, on 3 July, to put a regiment of Marines at MacArthur's disposal. Soon after, on 20 July, they agreed to send two more regiments to make up a Marine division.



Pusan

The North Korean People's Army (NKPA) that pushed the US forces ever southward from the 38th parallel in June 1950 had surprised its opponents with its combat ability and tactics which took the NKPA troops to within 48km (30 miles) of the port of Pusan, in the far southeast of the peninsula, by the last week of July 1950.

On 1 August, Lieutenant-General Walton Walker, the gifted commander of the Eighth US Army in Korea (EUSAK), ordered all forces to withdraw across the Nakdong River to around Pusan. And so early in August the UN Command forces had been forced into an area some 130km (80 miles) from north to south and 80km (50 miles) from east to west. This was the Pusan perimeter.

It was clear to General Douglas MacArthur that Pusan was the key to Korea and should be held at all costs, not necessarily as the base for renewed offensives against the NKPA but because the concentration of NKPA troops in the area would leave the way open for an amphibious landing further north. From 24 July 1950 onwards, therefore, reinforcements began to land at Pusan.

With the arrival of reinforcements, Walker drew up plans for a massed counter-offensive aimed at driving the NKPA northwards. But the first attempt to push out, which had begun on 7 August, was rather unsuccessful, and Walker was soon under pressure from renewed NKPA offensives. To the west, the 4th Division of the NKPA crossed the Nakdong and took the key territory of the Nakdong Bulge. Walker quickly moved the Marines into this sector and by 18 August had driven the NKPA back across the Nakdong. But at the same time in the north, five NKPA divisions, with armour, were attempting to break through in the Taegu area. Once again, by moving various regiments into the battle area Walker prevented a breakthrough, but only after large-scale tank battles, and the pressure in this area remained unaltered. Then, 19km (12 miles) west of Pohang-dong, the NKPA 5th Division pushed southwards and managed to trap the Republic of Korea (ROK) 3rd Division and cause their immediate evacuation by sea to Kuryongpo-ri – which was not completed until 17 August. Walker had to regroup the ROK 3rd and Capitol Divisions to force the NKPA back north west of Pohang-dong.

After this failure to smash the perimeter defences, the NKPA forward command decided on a strategy of coordinated offensives against Walker's forces

The Pusan perimeter



and by the beginning of September was deploying some 98,000 ground troops along the front (UN forces at this time were approximately 180,000). On the night of 31 August 1950, the NKPA forces launched a mass offensive against the defenders in the Masan sector. At the same time in the Nakdong Bulge sector two NKPA divisions with armoured support crossed the river and reached Yongsan late on 1 September.

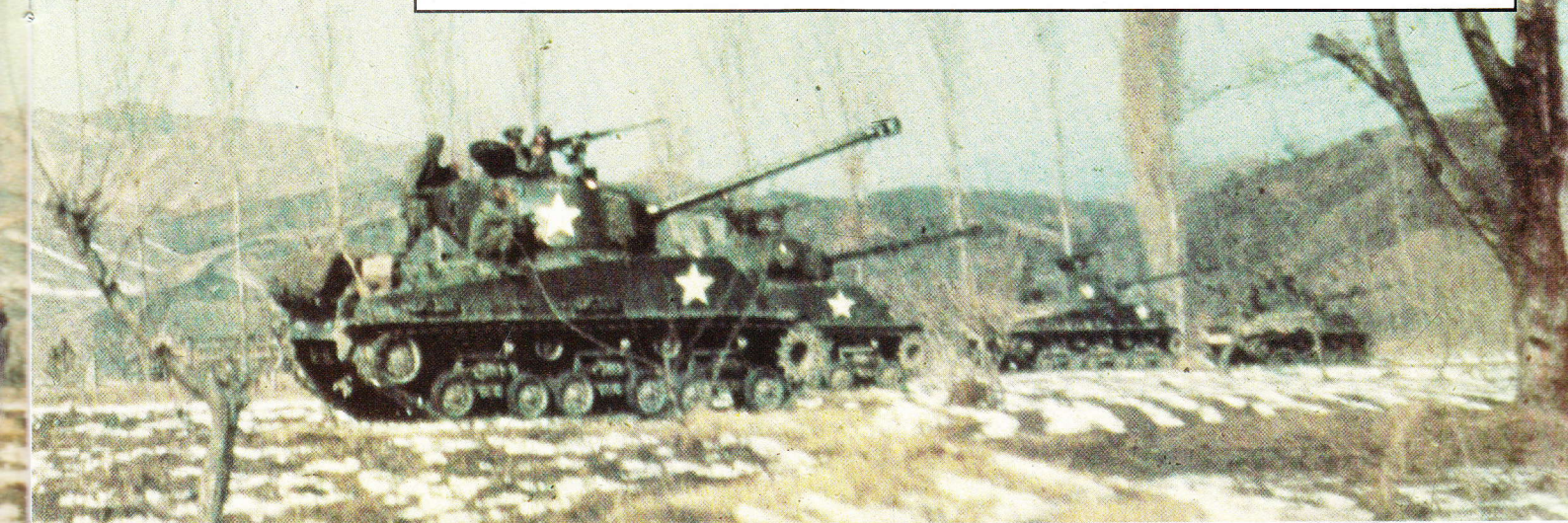
By 2 September, both in the Masan and Bulge sectors, the perimeter had been breached and by 6 September, Waegwan had been abandoned by the US forces defending it. On this same day Yongchon and Pohang-dong had once again been taken by the NKPA. The situation had become almost as bad as it had been in July. However Walker, with his skilful and rapid deployment of troops, forced the NKPA onto the defensive in all the areas where they had broken through and thus prevented them from exploiting their advantages – although as a precaution he did order EUSAK HQ to move to Pusan.

It was now, when it had become clear that Walker had won the perimeter battles, that the news of MacArthur's plans for Inchon seeped through. MacArthur was obviously intent on breaking the Nakdong deadlock; and by holding, through his brilliant defensive manoeuvres, the Pusan perimeter, Walker had helped to create the situation whereby, after the Inchon landings, the NKPA would be caught between the Eighth Army and the newly formed X Corps.

Alexander McNair-Wilson



Above: While tanks engaged targets at long range, troops such as these, firing a bazooka, were relied upon to eliminate close-quarter targets. Below: Holding on to the Pusan perimeter, M4 Shermans prepare to bombard enemy positions.



The decision to send the 1st Marine Division to the Far East may have been taken by the Joint Chiefs of Staff but the problem of actually finding the men still remained. Successive cutbacks of US forces since World War II meant that reservists would have to be called up. President Harry Truman was persuaded to sign the necessary papers to mobilise the Marine Corps Reserve on 19 July; 5000 men were called up on 20 July and, by 4 August, a further 29,000 men received their orders to rejoin the colours.

With a major effort underway in the United States to provide the forces for the landing at Inchon, preparations and planning for the operation, now codenamed Chromite, began with a flurry of activity at MacArthur's HQ in Japan. The problems to be overcome seemed at first-sight insurmountable and an officer on the planning staff said later 'we drew up a list of every conceivable natural and geographic handicap and Inchon had 'em all'. The harbour was approached by a long narrow seaway called Flying Fish Channel which followed a twisting course and thus effectively prevented large ships from getting close to the port itself. The channel would thus create major difficulties for an invasion fleet and in particular the destroyers and cruisers whose task it would be to provide naval gunfire support for the landing. Pinpoint navigational accuracy would be vital as the channel was dotted with rocks, reefs and islands – many of which were not charted.

The variations in tide were of critical importance. Inchon possesses one of the largest tidal ranges in the world with the difference between high and low tide rising periodically up to as much as 11m (36 feet). The landing and supporting ships would only be able to reach Inchon along Flying Fish Channel on the high tides of 15 September, 11 October and 3 November. When the tide fell away, even on those days, any shipping in the harbour would be stranded on the mud flats. With such tidal variations the current in the harbour and channel was extremely swift and mud banks were constantly shifted by the force of the water. In this respect, there was no up-to-date information available for MacArthur's staff to work on. The swift ebb and flow of the tide also meant that supporting naval ships would be forced to drop anchor to maintain their station whilst carrying out bombardments in support of the landings. This would make them sitting targets for enemy gunfire from shore-based artillery. In



any case, the shipping channel was so narrow that they would not be able to manoeuvre for fear of running aground on the adjacent mudbanks.

Another factor to be taken into account was the small island of Wolmi-do which stood just off Inchon harbour and which was linked to the mainland by a causeway. The hills on the island dominated the

approaches to the harbour and the harbour itself, which lay on the low coastal plain. The island was known to be heavily fortified and it would clearly have to be neutralised before the main landings took place. It was

Below: The moment of truth – US Marines, ladders at the ready, prepare to go over the top as their landing craft reaches the sea wall. The whole operation was so swiftly executed that casualties were kept to a minimum. Timed almost to perfection, beachheads were quickly established (above) and men and war material were rapidly disgorged onto the Inchon landing zone.





Blue Beach Two

'The 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines, was assigned to land over Blue Beach Two, the right flank beach, at Inchon. 'Beach' was a misnomer: there was a 12-foot sea-wall where we were to land. I had Weapons Company – .30 calibre water-cooled machine guns, 81mm mortars, 3.5-inch rocket launchers, backpacked flamethrowers, and demolitions. We were to get over the wall by scaling ladders left in place by the two assault rifle companies.

'I was embarked, along with part of my company and the battalion command group, in LST 802, a well-rusted veteran of World War II.

'We were Wave 5. Our amphibious tractors plunged off the bow ramp at 1630 hours. There was that dubious moment when you see nothing but water and you wonder if your tractor is going to sink or swim. Then we got clear and I led my wave away. We had been told that a wave guide would pick us up and lead us to the line of departure. No wave guide appeared. Two LCVPs – landing craft – did come alongside. The first was filled with photographers. The second was loaded with Korean interpreters. Two of these were dumped into my LVT under the mistaken notion that I was the battalion commander. Neither spoke English.

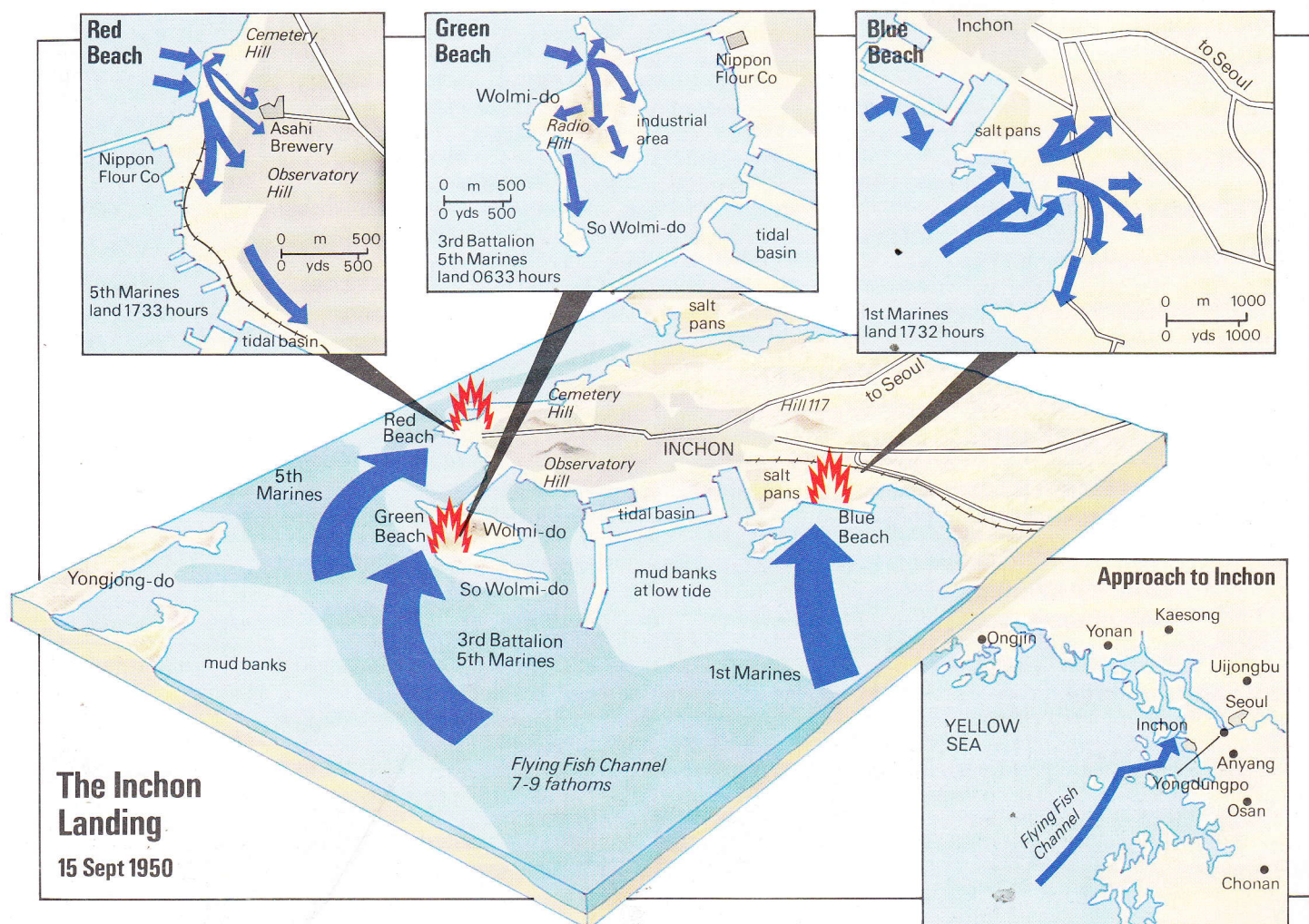
'In the smoke and haze I could see almost nothing and was feeling faintly desperate when we came up on a large grey shape. It looked like a destroyer that had been chopped off abaft the bridge so I supposed it was the Blue Beach control vessel, USS *Wantuck*

(APD-125). I asked the bridge for instructions. A Navy officer with a bull-horn pointed out the direction of Blue Beach Two and we were on our way. Although I could see nothing but mustard-coloured haze and black smoke. I broke out my map and asked my LVT driver if he had a compass. He looked at his instrument panel and said, "Search me; six weeks ago I was driving a truck in San Francisco". I got out my lensatic compass and, with no confidence in its accuracy within a steel hull, made a best guess as to the azimuth of our approach lane.

'The sea-wall became visible at about 200 yards. H-hour was 1730. It was now about 1750 and neither the assault platoons nor the first wave armoured amphibious tractors – LVT(A)s – were fully ashore. Small arms fire was moderately heavy and there was the occasional plop of a mortar shell in the water. I led Wave 5 in a circle to prevent further congestion at the sea-wall. Three or four of the LVT(A)s crawled up through a drainage ditch that came down through the sea-wall. I followed with my wave. We disembarked from our tractors and found ourselves sandwiched between the assault and support platoons of the lead rifle companies.

'It was getting increasingly dark, complicating the business of sorting out individuals and units. The companies moved out for their objectives against light, scattered resistance. By 2030 the battalion had reached its O-1 line. We dug in for the night and waited for the expected counterattack. Fortunately it never came.'

Brigadier-General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret.)



Problems of command

Command for Inchon had to accommodate both American inter-service rivalries and international sensibilities. Six countries were contributing forces, but most of the muscle was American. A partial solution came late in August with the activation of Joint Task Force Seven under Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble. Struble's command was, in fact the US Seventh Fleet, but designating it a joint task force brought it under the immediate control of General MacArthur as C-in-C, Far East and C-in-C, UN Command.

The command of the expeditionary troops was the sticky issue. MacArthur's own planners had assumed that command would go to Lieutenant-General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr, US Marine Corps.

US Army doubts of Marine Corps competence for high command were endemic, however. Further, the very name of the 1st Marine Division com-

manding general, Oliver P. Smith, was a reminder to the army of an unpleasantness at Saipan in 1944 when Lieutenant-General Holland M. ('Howlin' Mad') Smith, USMC, commanding V Amphibious Corps, relieved Major-General Ralph C. Smith, USA, commanding 27th Infantry Division.

How much this might have influenced MacArthur is not clear and he decided in favour of an army corps headquarters. He activated X Corps on 26 August, giving its command to Major-General Edward M. Almond.

Almond, aged 57, put off Smith, 56, at their first meeting by calling him 'Son' and dismissing the amphibious assault as 'purely mechanical'. Marine Corps chagrin at having Shepherd displaced by Almond was mollified by having Smith, as Landing Force Commander, report directly to Admiral Doyle, the Attack Force Commander, until after the assault phase was successfully concluded.

Brigadier-General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret.)

also feared that Flying Fish Channel and the immediate approaches to the port might be mined, which would add immeasurably to the hazards faced by the ships associated with the operation. In the event, some mines had been laid but they caused little difficulty. A large supply of Russian mines was stacked on the quay but they still awaited their arming devices at the time of the landing.

Lastly there were the anxieties concerning the location and suitability of beaches on which to make the landings. In fact, there were no beaches in the conventional sense of the word. The main assault would have to go in near the town of Inchon and be made against rocky sea walls constructed as defences against an ever encroaching sea. These walls would have to be scaled by the first troops ashore and breached almost immediately to allow the swift landing of tanks, guns and vehicles. To add to this problem the so-called beaches led straight from the waterside into the built-up harbour area of Inchon.

During the preparations for the landing major efforts were made to discover answers to all these problems causing grave anxiety to the planners. A need to keep secret the intention to land at Inchon precluded the possibility of detailed reconnaissance by air or sea which might have found an answer to most questions. Instead, more cautious methods had to be utilised. Some 200 Korean agents were infiltrated into the area to check on various questions ranging from strengths and dispositions of the enemy in the Inchon area to details of the sea walls.

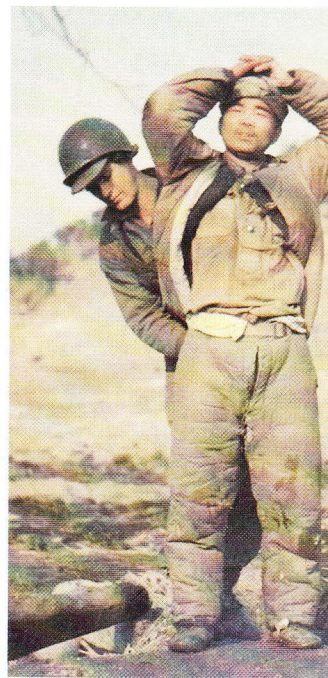
One particularly daring escapade provided much needed information on the channel leading to the harbour and the port area itself. On 1 September a US naval lieutenant was landed on a small island in the outer reaches of the harbour and, operating from there using local Korean fishermen sympathetic to the UN cause, he succeeded in obtaining a great deal of data on enemy positions, tides, mud flats and the sea walls.

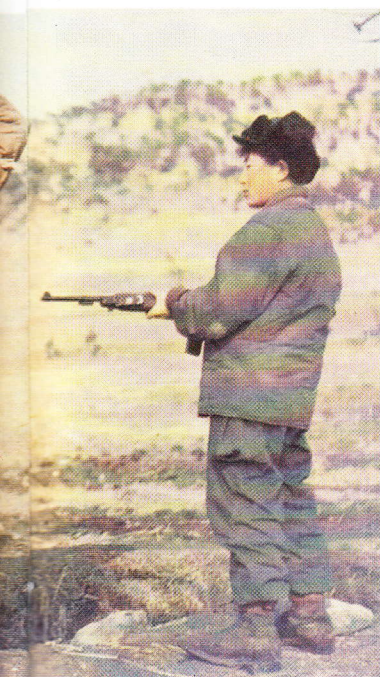
His final achievement was to rekindle the ancient equipment of a lighthouse on Palmi-do island so that it went into operation on the night the landing fleet arrived and thus helped guide it into Flying Fish Channel itself.

In order to distract the enemy's attention from the inevitable activities in the Inchon area many other raids, bombardments and air and sea reconnaissances were carried out at other locations both on the west and east coasts of the peninsula. The effort appeared to have paid off as nothing was done to increase the garrisons of Seoul or Inchon and it seems highly probable that the North Koreans were unaware that Inchon had been chosen until a few days before the operation commenced.

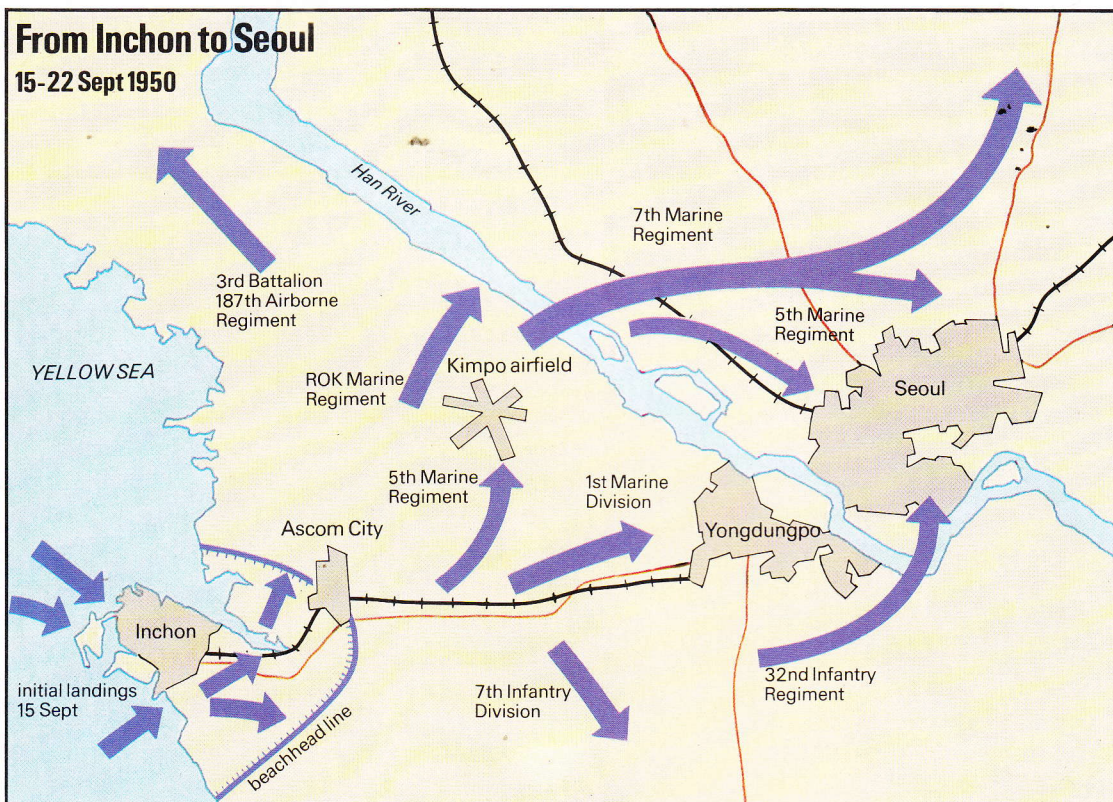
The detailed planning for Operation Chromite began on 12 August when the decision was finally taken to land at Inchon on 15 September. The task of planning the operation fell to the Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group (JSPOG) of MacArthur's Far Eastern Command HQ. A nucleus of officers within JSPOG was nominated to form the staff of X Corps which was activated to be the formation to carry out the landing. The Corps was to be commanded by Major-General Edward Almond, MacArthur's chief of staff, and would comprise 1st US Marine Division and 7th US Infantry Division from the occupation forces in Japan.

During the final stages of planning for the operation there were many anxious moments. The officers of JSPOG were continually coming up against seemingly insurmountable stumbling blocks. It was not just that the conditions for the landing were so hazardous; there were also problems with regard to gathering together the necessary men, weapons, vehicles, landing ships and craft. The imperative demands of the Pusan perimeter as conditions there worsened caused many headaches and, even in the last days prior to the landing, elements of 7th Infantry Division were held





The push to Seoul after the successful Inchon initiative. Three US Marines take cover (top) as they begin to clear Seoul of communist forces. Above: While a US Marine searches a captured North Korean, a soldier of the South Korean Army (armed with a US M1A1 carbine) stands guard.



on call to reinforce the troops defending Pusan. Despite superhuman efforts to gather together the Marines, the 7th Regiment arrived in Japan only on 17 September (two days after the landing went in) and initially a regiment of South Korean Marines provided the divisional reserve for the landing.

The provision of Tank Landing Ships (LSTs) was another nightmare. It was calculated that 47 were needed but the US Navy could lay hands on only 17. In the end, the remaining 30 were provided from Japan where they had been used as inter-island ferries. These ships came complete with Japanese crews, one being commanded by an admiral and two by captains formerly of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

MacArthur remained doggedly determined despite the doubts voiced by his staff. Not only was he assailed from below, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington also continued to have grave reservations as to the feasibility of the operation. On 23 August a major conference assembled in Tokyo. MacArthur and his senior staff were present but so were the Chief of the Army Staff, General Lawton Collins, and the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They had flown in specially to find out the exact details of the enterprise. The conference began with a general outline of the plans for the landing given by staff officers: MacArthur, meanwhile, sat quietly smoking his old corn-cob pipe. At the conclusion of the briefing Collins and Sherman asked various detailed questions and proffered one or two suggestions.

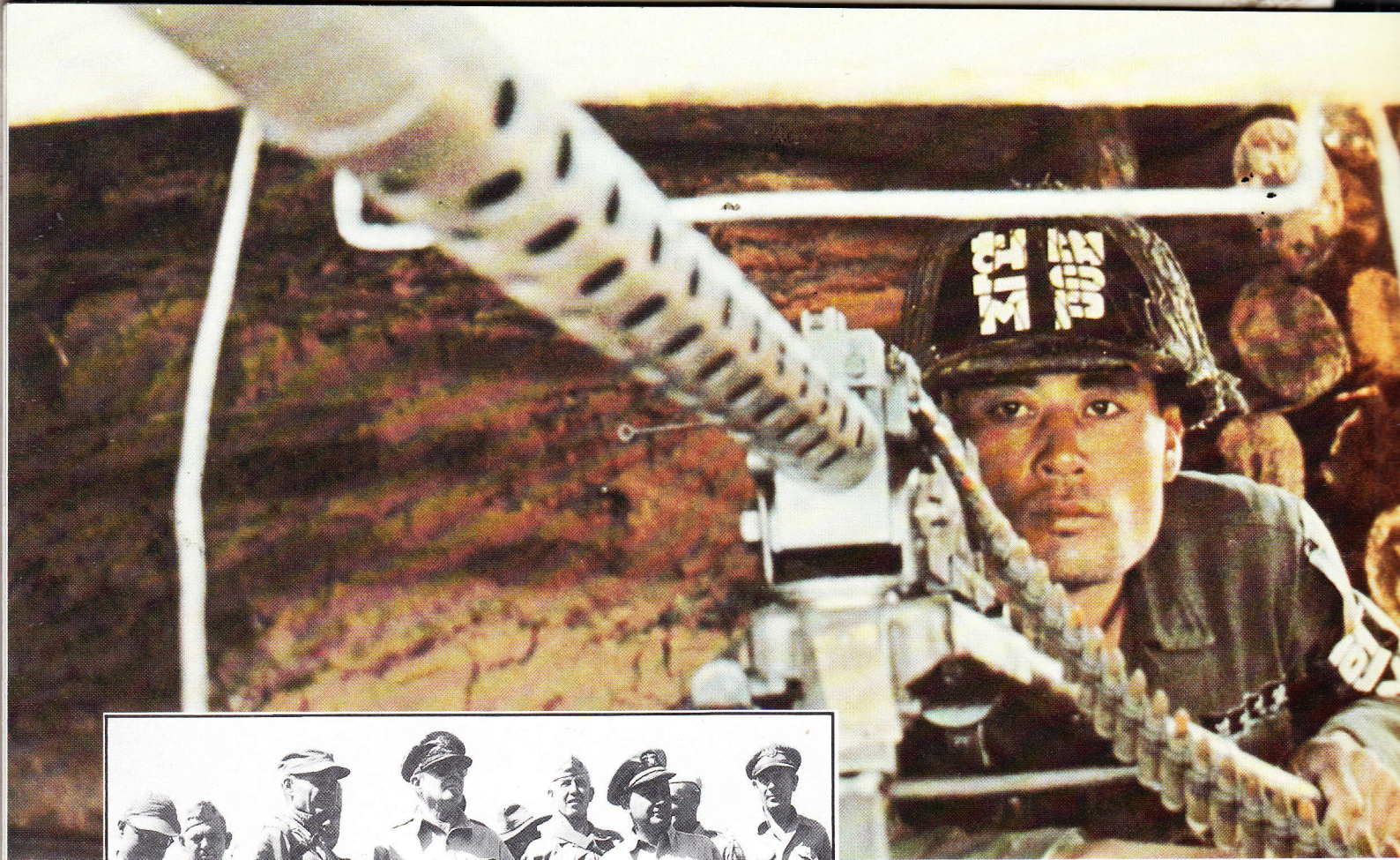
MacArthur then rose to his feet and, speaking for 45 minutes, he outlined his reasons for going for the assault on Inchon. The capture of Seoul would strike a major blow at the North Korean offensive to the south, but more important, it would be a psychological victory of great magnitude. He defended the choice of Inchon despite the seeming difficulties such a choice invited, by comparing it to the unexpected

assault on the Heights of Abraham at Quebec in 1759 by General Wolfe when the impossible nature of the heights caused the French to ignore them as a likely route of attack by the British. MacArthur claimed that the NKPA would view Inchon in the same light. Coming to the end of his statement he dropped his voice to barely a whisper and concluded: 'We shall land at Inchon and I shall destroy them'. The room was wrapped in silence as he finished speaking and it was clear he had won everyone over. All had been carried along by his confidence and enthusiasm and, not a little, by his fervent oratory.

The broad plan envisaged that a battalion landing team (BLT3) of the 5th Marines would land at Green Beach on Wolmi-do on the morning tide of 15 September. The remainder of the 5th Marines would land on the evening tide at Red Beach to the northwest of the town itself and, at the same time, the 1st Marines would land at Blue Beach to the south of the town.

The first ships en route for Inchon left Japan on 5 September and once the whole fleet was at sea, Admiral Arthur Struble, the naval commander, numbered 260 vessels in his fleet. At one moment, after the fleet had sailed, it looked as though the whole operation might be in jeopardy as an unexpected typhoon swept across the Yellow Sea. The armada rode out the storm, however, and continued undeterred northwards.

From 10 September air attacks were carried out against Wolmi-do and Inchon with increasing ferocity and for two days before the landing the navy pounded the island of Wolmi-do and the area of Red and Blue Beaches on the mainland with naval gunfire supplemented with rockets, napalm and bombs from carrier-based aircraft. Destroyers sailed close-in to their targets and brought a murderous fire to bear on the enemy's gun emplacements and trenches. At the same time cruisers, relying on airborne observers,



Top: Armed with a .3in Browning machine gun, a soldier of the South Korean Army keeps a lookout for any possible communist attack. Note the tracer rounds (an aid to long-range target acquisition) that occur in every fifth round of the ammunition link-chain. Above: General MacArthur (centre), flanked by Colonel Lewis B. Puller and Major-General Oliver P. Smith, surveys the battlefield from his hilltop position, two days after the success of the Inchon landings.

wrought havoc on targets further inland.

When the ships carrying BLT3 to Wolmi-do sailed in on the early morning tide of 15 September the island was scarcely visible behind the pall of smoke which hung over it and the port to the east. The landing craft hit Green Beach at 0633 hours and were met with minimal resistance. The main height of the island was scaled, the American flag broken there by 0655 hours and the whole island taken by 0800 hours. The tide had already turned as the Marines consolidated their positions on the island. They were then effectively marooned with no chance of assistance until late afternoon when the high water would return bringing with it the main forces for Red and Blue Beaches. They needn't have worried: the enemy made no attempt to counter-attack the island and, at 1430 hours, naval gunfire commenced to soften up the enemy in preparation for the evening landings.

The troops landing at Red Beach reached the shore at 1731 hours and after successfully negotiating the sea wall, with the help of assault ladders, they made rapid progress into the town against limited and sporadic resistance. By midnight the 5th Marines had seized their objectives at Observatory Hill and Cemetery Hill. Eight LSTs had run ashore and were disgorging tanks, guns and vehicles which would all help to sustain the beachhead against counter-attack

(should it come in the morning) or, better still, be used to support further advances at daylight.

To the south of the town the 1st Marines landed at Blue Beach at exactly 1730 hours but the landing was not as smoothly accomplished as that at Red Beach. Some landing craft ran aground on mud flats 450m (500 yards) from the shore and part of the reserve battalion landed in the wrong area. All this was, in part, because of the heavy smoke cloud which hung across the land completely obscuring it from the approaching landing craft. Navigation was, in such conditions, a matter of guesswork. Despite this unhappy start the 1st Marines had achieved their initial objectives by midnight.

By dawn next morning, 16 September, the Marine Division was ready to press on towards its final goals, Kimpo airfield and the capital, Seoul. The landings had been achieved with remarkably few casualties: 20 killed in action, one died from wounds, one missing in action and 174 wounded. However, as was soon to be discovered, the NKPA may have been caught napping by the landing but they were certainly not going to allow the taking of Seoul to be a walk-over.

The city was garrisoned by some 20,000 NKPA troops and they withstood successive batterings by the enormous firepower of the Americans until they were virtually annihilated. Marines were on the outskirts of Seoul by 20 September and it took them, notwithstanding their firepower, until 27 September before they could claim the city as theirs. In the intervening period the slaughter and destruction had been terrible.

MacArthur's gamble at Inchon had paid off. Against all the odds it was a success. Few would have imagined at the time, as MacArthur added to his laurels this 'impossible victory' (as it came to be known), that it would be his last.

Major F. A. Godfrey

Key Weapons

ISRAELI SPGs



KEY WEAPONS

Since World War II there has been a growing trend towards self-propelled artillery, a move reflected within the Israeli Army which has produced its own designs as well as importing SPGs (self-propelled guns) from France and America. Although more expensive than conventional artillery, SPGs possess a number of advantages that make them an invaluable element within the IDF (Israeli Defence Force). In the open terrain of the Arab-Israeli battlefields the ability of the SPG to carry on firing during counter-bombardments is of great value, as is its ability to keep up with the advanced armoured formations that have played such a vital role in securing Israel victory over its Arab opponents.

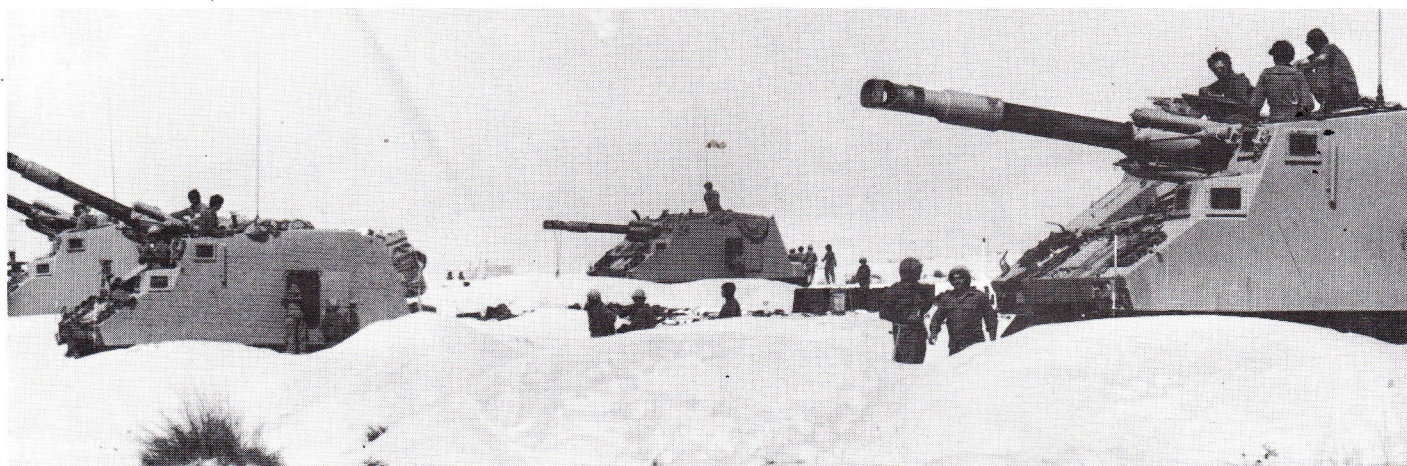
The first self-propelled artillery to be imported by Israel came from France in the 1950s, the Mk 61 SPG, which consisted of a 105mm Model A howitzer

mounted on an AMX-13 light-tank chassis. At the same time the Israeli arms industry was trying to develop its own models, the first of these being the 155mm M50 SP howitzer which came into service in 1963 after years of development. Utilising the trusty Sherman chassis (with its engine moved to the front right of the vehicle) it carried a French 155mm Model 50 howitzer. Far more powerful than the lightweight Mk 61, the M50 can lob a 43kg projectile to a maximum range of 17,000m (18,600yds) – in comparison to the 16kg and 15,000m of the M61. The armoured sides of the M50 were subsequently modified to give better protection and the powerplant upgraded with the introduction of the 460 horsepower Cummins diesel engine.

Israeli interest in developing the Sherman as a gun platform was extended with the introduction of the

Previous page: US-built M109A1 SPGs of the Israeli Army pound Syrian positions during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Below: A forward view of the mobile M109A1 with its 155mm main armament.





L-33 SP gun/howitzer in 1973. Armed with a 155mm M68 gun/howitzer, the L-33 soon saw action, playing its part in the Yom Kippur War in October of 1973. While powered by the same Cummins engine as the M50, the L-33 was generally a more advanced design, capable of faster and more sustained rates of fire. For crew protection a 7.62mm machine gun is mounted on the right-hand side of the L-33's roof and can be used against ground targets as well as acting in an anti-aircraft role.

The private arms company Soltam Limited have produced a number of designs for the Israeli Army including a 160mm mortar mounted on a Sherman chassis. A simple design, cheap to manufacture, this motorised heavy mortar has a range of 9600m (10,500yds) and first saw action during the border fighting of 1968-70. More advanced is the 155mm

Soltam SP gun/howitzer. Unlike previous models this semi-experimental model uses a modified Centurion chassis, although other types – such as the M48 or M60 – could be employed. The Soltam M68 gun is fitted and when the longer 39 calibre barrel is used the gun has a range of 23,500m (25,150yds).

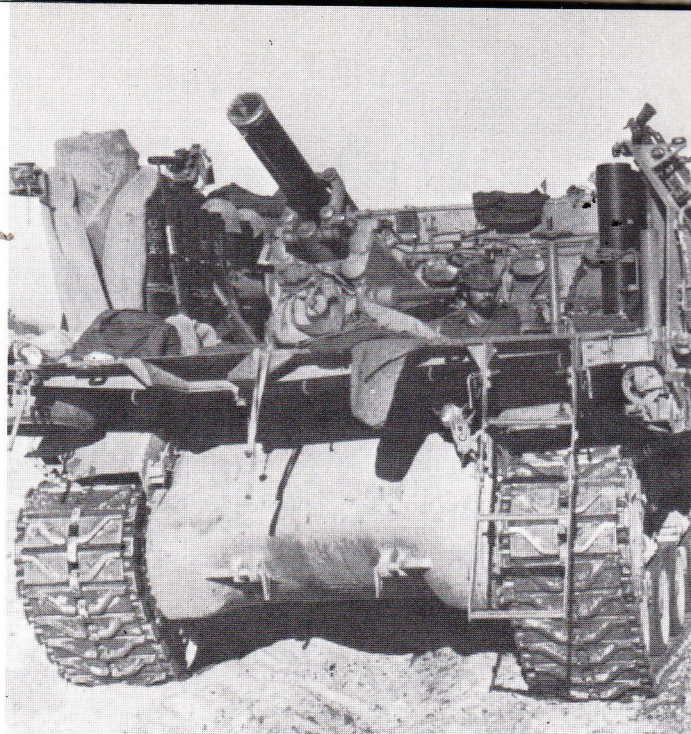
Despite the Israelis' success in developing their own models, they have been forced to rely on large numbers of imported SPGs from the United States. The most important type is the M109, the most widely used howitzer in service in the world. Turret-mounted, the 155mm howitzer is capable of being traversed through a full 360 degrees and, powered by a turbocharged diesel engine, it can attain a top speed of 56km/h (35mph). In Israel this SPG is designated the M109 AL and has been modified to carry extra ammunition.

Above: A battery of L-33s prepares for action in forward positions in the Sinai Desert during the Yom Kippur War.



Left: An L-33 on parade in Israel. The distinctive Sherman hull and chassis can be easily discerned in this photograph.

KEY WEAPONS



KEY ISRAELI SPGs

Mk 61 SP Howitzer

Crew 5

Weight 16,500kg (36,395lb)

Performance Maximum road speed 60km/h (37mph); range (road) 350km (217miles)

Armament One 105mm 61-AU howitzer, HE range 15,000m (16,400yds)

M50 SP Howitzer

Crew 8

Weight 31,000kg (68,343lb)

Performance Maximum road speed 42km/h (26mph); range (road) 160km (99 miles)

Armament One 155mm 50-BF howitzer, HE range 20,000m (21,870yds)

L-33 SP Gun/Howitzer

Crew 8

Weight 41,500kg (91,500lb)

Performance Maximum road speed 36km/h (22mph); range (road) 260km (162 miles)

Armament One 155mm Soltam M68 gun/howitzer, HE range 21,000m (22,966yds); one 7.62mm machine gun

M109 SP Howitzer

Crew 6

Weight 23,786kg (52,440lb)

Performance Maximum road speed 56km/h (35mph); range (road) 390km (242 miles)

Armament One 155mm howitzer, HE range 14,700m (16,080yds); one 0.5in AA machine gun

M107 SP Gun

Crew 5 plus 8 in support

Weight 28,168kg (62,100lb)

Performance Maximum road speed 56km/h (35mph); range (road) 725km (450 miles)

Armament One 175mm howitzer, HE range 32,800m (34,996yds)

M110 SP Gun

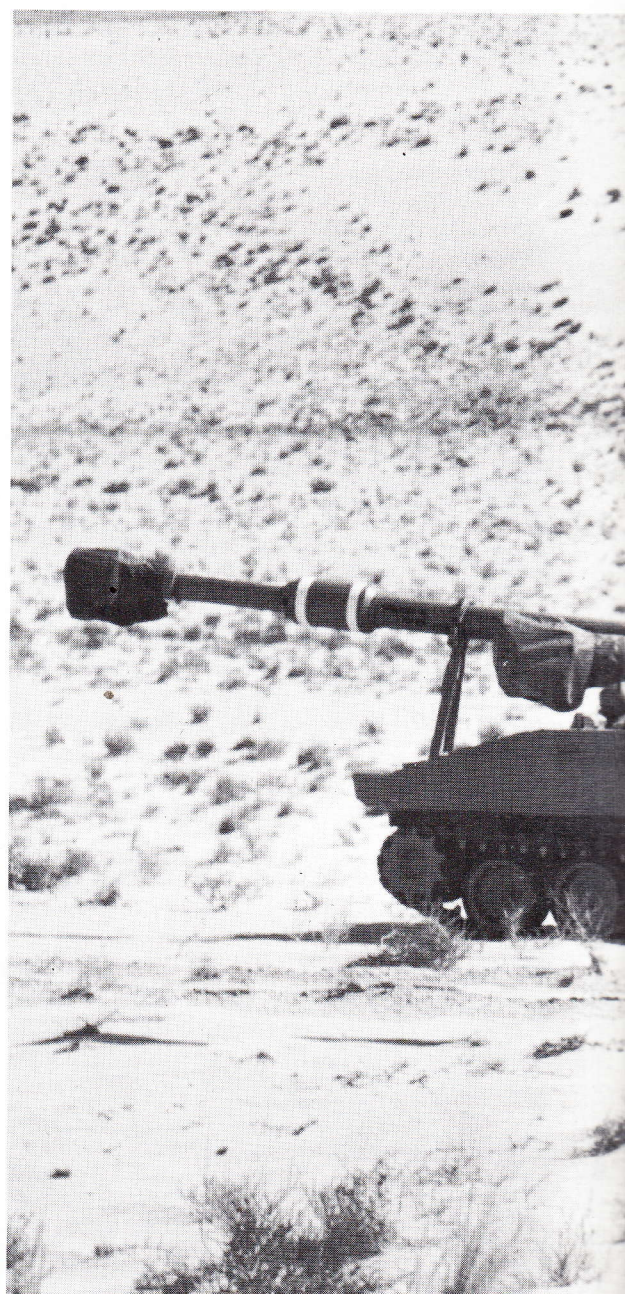
Crew 5 plus 8 in support

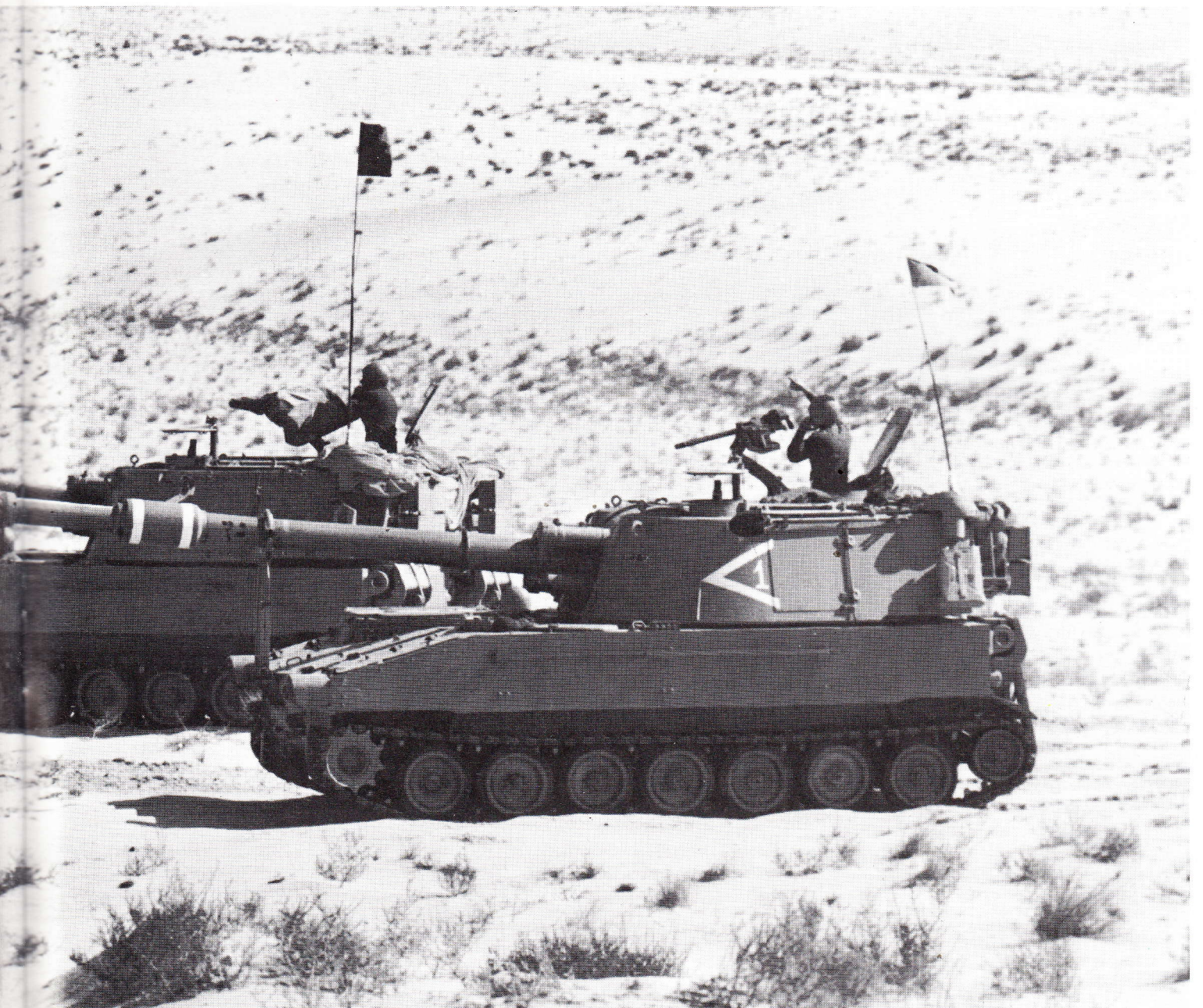
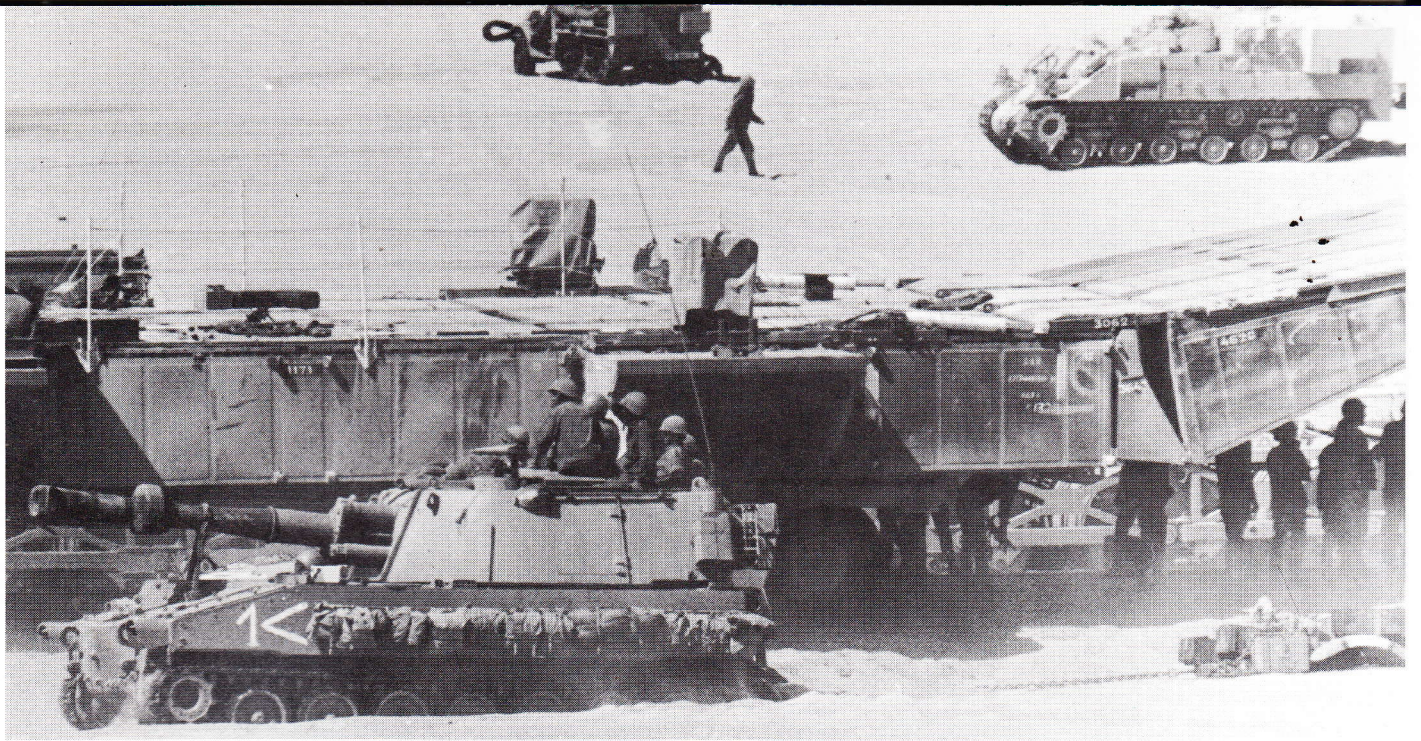
Weight 26,534kg (58,480lb)

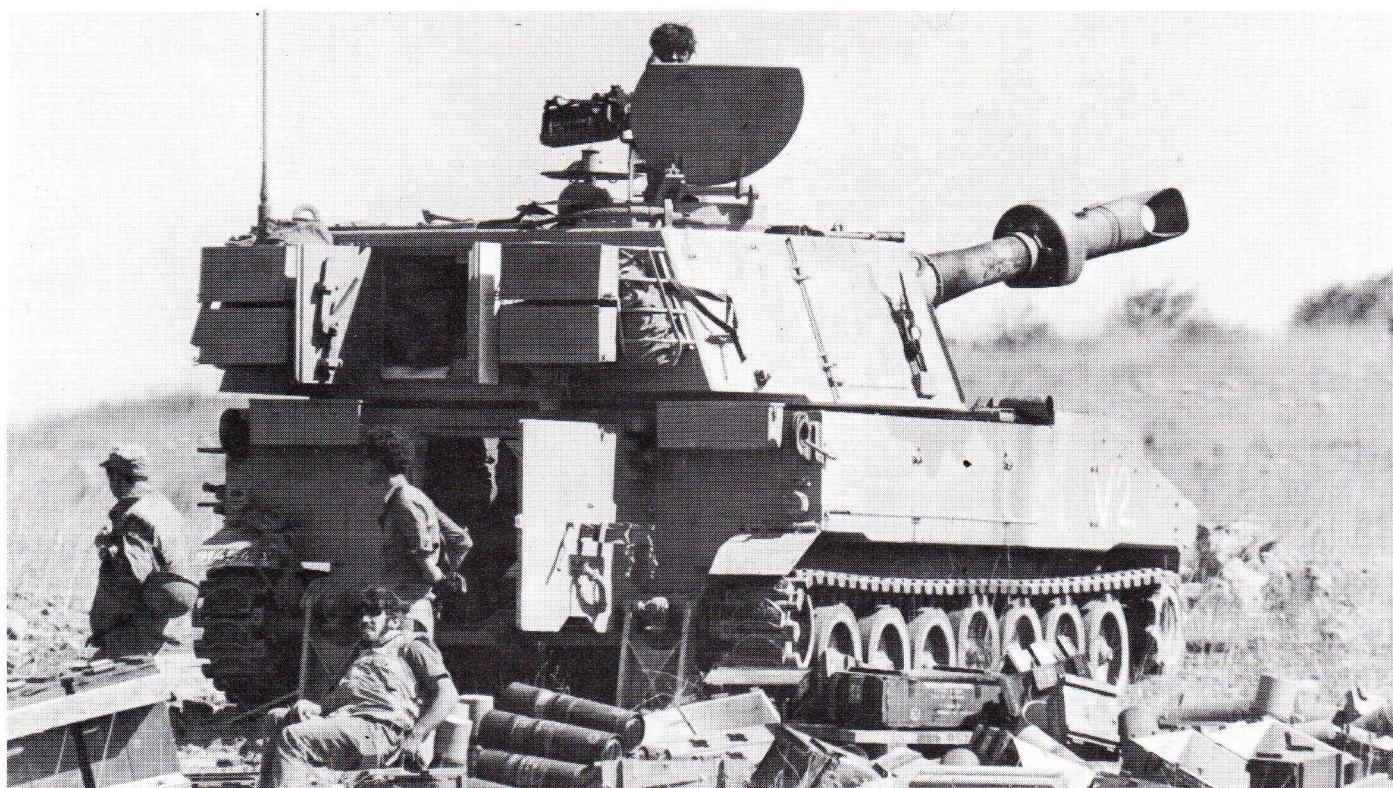
Performance Maximum road speed 56km/h (35mph); range (road) 725km (450 miles)

Armament One 203mm (8in) howitzer, HE range 16,800m (18,370yds)

Two successful Israeli SPG designs were the M50 (above left) and the Soltam 160mm mortar (above right). Both models were skilful adaptations of the long-serving M4 Sherman. Opposite top: An M109 advances through deep sand in front of a pontoon bridge being towed towards the Suez Canal. Right: Two M109A1s on artillery exercises in the Negev Desert.







In the early 1970s the M109 was fitted with an improved gun to become the M109A1 and a number were purchased by Israel. The new gun gives a better range so that when using an HERAP (high-explosive, rocket-assisted projectile) a maximum range of 24,000m (26,250yds) is possible. M109s were much in evidence during the invasion of the Lebanon in 1982.

At the heavyweight end of Israel's self-propelled artillery are the US-built M107 and M110 SPGs which employ a common chassis and are armed with 175mm and 203mm (8in) guns respectively. The long-barrelled high-velocity M107 has an excellent

range of 32,700m (35,600yds) but suffers accordingly from high barrel wear and is able to fire only HE rounds. The M110 is capable of firing a number of ammunition types including tactical nuclear and can fire HE RAP to a maximum range of 29,000m (31,700yds). Unlike the M109, both M107 and M110 are unarmoured (except for the driver's compartment) and this lack of protection caused a whole battery of M107s to be destroyed during fighting in 1973. Nonetheless these types have proved their worth when, for instance, during the Yom Kippur War M107s on the Golan Heights were able to shell Damascus some 32km (20 miles) distant.

Top: Israel's heavy artillery – a 203mm M110 in action, firing on Syrian positions during the Yom Kippur War. Above: The crew of an M109 take a rest during a lull in the fighting on the Golan Heights in 1973. Empty ammunition cases are strewn around, an indication of the intensity of the fighting on this front.

WAR IN PEACE

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